

My name is Margaret A. (Peggy) Duezabou, and I vote in house district 84. I have trained, bred, and exhibited dogs in conformation, obedience, agility, tracking, and herding events since 1969.

I am opposed to HB 191. I believe it would not be an effective instrument for preventing or reducing dog-bite incidents in Montana. Rather than helping identify potential biters before there is an incident, HB 191 would, unnecessarily, target non-aggressive dogs and punish their owners.

Montana Code Annotated (7-23-2109) already defines a "vicious dog" and authorizes county governments to provide a process for dealing with these animals. There is a very clear test or definition for vicious dogs, one based on their actions and deeds, not their looks.

HB 191 provides insufficient clarity for the breeds listed. Even within a breed, dogs differ in color, size, head shape, ear carriage, and—certainly—disposition. Some individual dogs are easily recognized as a particular breed, but others are not. For example, everyone knows Lassie is gold and white in color, but many people are confused when they see a black, tan, and white Collie with a smooth coat. I suspect a similar murkiness will surround identifying 'breeds' listed in HB 191. County officials and Animal Control Officers would be called upon to make arbitrary decisions regarding a dog's identity and, ultimately, its life.

HB 191 would be difficult to implement and would place an unfair burden on law-abiding citizens because of its licensing and management provisions. These are some of the people who would feel the impact:

1. Dog owners. Not all counties require licensing of dogs. This would make it impossible for some people to comply with the licensing provision to retain their pets. Those who *have* licensed their dogs, correctly identifying them as a banned breed, would be required either to undertake extreme management procedures or to kill their pets.
2. Shelter operators. Shelters statewide currently house dogs banned by HB 191. Thus, organizations committed to bettering the lives of animals would be forced to kill them.
3. Dog show sponsors. Various kennel clubs currently sponsor competitions throughout Montana. These events generate hundreds of thousands of dollars for local communities. HB 191 would make it impossible for targeted breeds to participate even if kennel clubs were able to obtain their county's permission. Obedience and agility dogs perform off lead and muzzle-free. None could enter.

Dog bite prevention is advanced by education and by owners' taking responsibility for their dogs' behavior. Behavior, not appearances, is a far better indicator of a dog's inclination to bite, and a behavioral screen is already part of Montana Code. Therefore, I sincerely urge members of Montana's Local Government Committee to reject HB 191.